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Bodies Transformed: Negotiations of Identity in Chalcolithic Cyprus

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This paper focuses on how the human body, and the dead body in particular, was used to create social categories and identities in prehistoric Cyprus. Specifically, it explores how a particular condition, such as death, was integrated into social processes, and how the treatment of dead bodies both created and reinforced social categories and identities. The material the paper focuses on is the mortuary evidence from Chalcolithic Cyprus (3800–2300 BC). In particular, it argues that the extensive, intentional manipulation of dead bodies and human remains visible in Cypriot Chalcolithic cemeteries was aimed at integrating the individual to communal, collective wholes on the occasion of death and during the time period that followed.

Keywords: Archaeology of the body, social categories, social identities, human remains, secondary burial, Chalcolithic, Cyprus

INTRODUCTION

Works focusing on the archaeology of the body (see Rautman, 2000; Hamilakis et al., 2002; Sofaer, 2006; Borić & Robb, 2008; Joyce, 2008) are still relatively few in Cyprus, but they are clearly on the rise (some examples include Knapp & Meskell, 1997; Lorentz, 2004; Mina, 2012; on gender: Bolger 1996, 2002, 2003, 2012; on identity: Knapp, 1993, 2008; Webb & Frankel, 1999; Talalay & Cullen, 2002). Archaeologies of the body have often focused on evidence other than human remains, such as anthropomorphic depictions in a variety of media and materials, and artefacts (e.g. ornaments, weaponry etc.) and their placement on the body. According to Joyce (2005: 139), archaeology of the body has matured

through shifts in perception over the last few decades: initially viewing the body as a site of display, or as an artefact, followed by a focus on the body as a site of lived experience (a social body, a site of embodied agency). Joyce indicates that the study of human remains is in a key position to open up avenues for exploring embodied experience (ibid.: 148–49). Detailed bioarchaeological studies of human skeletal remains aimed at social interpretations (Moore & Scott, 1997; Gowland & Knüsel, 2006; Rebay-Salisbury et al., 2010; Agarwal & Glen-cross, 2011) are still relatively rare in Cypriot archaeology, although physical anthropology in Cyprus has a long history (see references in Fox & Harper, 2008; Lorentz, 2011). Gender archaeology (Sørensen, 2000), sociologies of the body

(Laqueur, 1999; Prout, 2000; Malacrida & Low, 2008), works on cultural construction of the body (Mauss, 1934; Bourdieu, 1977), and on social theory and agency (Giddens, 1979, 1984; Dobres & Robb, 2000) may usefully inform further approaches.

The majority of archaeological information on the Chalcolithic of Cyprus is currently derived from extensively investigated sites in the southwest part of the island (Peltenburg, 1985, 1998, 2006, 2011; Crewe et al., 2005; Peltenburg et al., 2006) and, thus, the following characterizations of social organization, organization of space, exchange networks, and burial practices should be understood to relate to this area. Regarding social organization, the Middle (3500–2800 BC) and Late Chalcolithic (2800–2300 BC) in Cyprus has been characterized by Peltenburg (2011: 682) as a time of ‘significant regional levels of social integration’, ‘significant increase in settlement density, concurrent with the increase in elaboration and size of buildings’, and economic intensification evident as the beginnings of

a shift away from hunting to herding. Peltenburg (ibid.: 683) also argues for ‘emerging subtle inequalities’ and the ‘appearance of certain groups within ‘egalitarian’ society who achieved high status’ by promoting an ideology materially expressed through elaborate birthing figurines, based on evidence from the settlement site of *Kissonerga-Mosphilia*. Other Chalcolithic settlement remains in the southwest have been found at *Lemba-Lakkous*, *Kissonerga-Mylouthkia*, and *Souskiou-Laona* (Figure 1). As to exchange and regional networks, Peltenburg (2011: 688) holds that the *Souskiou-Laona* settlement served as a production centre for such cruciform birthing figurines, and that these ‘served a mortuary ideology which was used to integrate communities across the region’. Procurement of the specific type of stone (picrolite) for the manufacture of these figurines would have formed another incentive for the development of exchange networks. Substantial exchange networks reaching beyond Cyprus develop extensively only later in the Bronze Age.

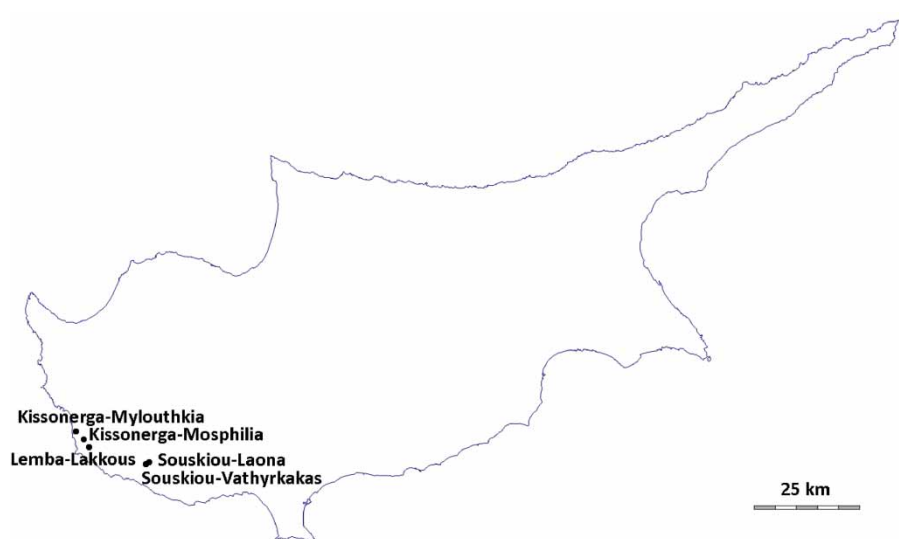


Figure 1. Map of Cyprus showing the location of the sites mentioned in the text.

As to organization of space, settlements contain round structures in close proximity to each other, as well as simple earth-cut pit type burials of mainly single individuals. During the later part of the Middle Chalcolithic a different burial practice emerges; in addition to settlement burials, burials are found in cemeteries, outside settlements, in rock-cut tombs mostly of the bottle shaped type, with several individuals interred into single features, and with secondary manipulation of human remains. Cemeteries are currently only known from the area of Souskiou and continued to be used during the early part of the Late Chalcolithic. These cemeteries have been characterized as ‘remarkable’ (Catling, 1979: 271) and ‘unique’ (Peltenburg, 2011: 681) in the pre-Bronze Age context (cf. Keswani, 2004), completely changing our understanding of Chalcolithic burial customs (Toumazou, 1987: 151). They constitute a major exception in view of the island’s Neolithic and Chalcolithic mortuary records (Niklasson, 1991; Knapp et al., 1994: 377–453). Therefore, the emergence of these cemeteries in the later part of the Middle Chalcolithic is in itself a remarkable development, continuously noted in scholarly literature since the 1970s. What people did with the bodies of their deceased in those cemetery settings is, however, something that we have had very little, if any, information on until the recovery and analyses of human remains from the intact burial contexts at *Souskiou-Laona*, and this is where the contribution of this paper lies.

The aim of the paper is to consider how the human body, and the dead body in particular, was used to create social categories and identities. In particular, the paper outlines the evidence for the extensive intentional manipulation of dead bodies and their remains in the Cypriot Chalcolithic cemeteries, and argues that such manipulations were aimed at

integrating the individual to communal, collective wholes at and after death. Further, I argue that this process was not gender or age differential on the whole.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data for this paper were obtained in the following manner: original unpublished data on human remains and their contexts were derived from the author’s work on the bioarchaeological excavation and analyses at the Chalcolithic cemetery site of *Souskiou-Laona* (Crewe et al. 2005; Peltenburg 2011). Further evidence was gleaned from publications and first hand analyses (by the author; unpublished data) of relevant Chalcolithic mortuary contexts and human remains, including the *Souskiou-Vathyrkakas* cemeteries (Lunt et al., 2006; Peltenburg, 2006), as well as the mortuary contexts from Chalcolithic settlement sites (*Kissonerga-Mosphilia*: Lunt, 1995; Lunt & Watt, 1998; Peltenburg, 1998; *Kissonerga-Mylouthkia*: Fox et al., 2003; *Lemba-Lakkous*: Peltenburg, 1985; Lunt, 1995; *Souskiou-Laona* settlement: Peltenburg et al., 2006). The settlement sites mentioned, with the exception of *Laona*, are located relatively close to each other (Figure 1). The *Souskiou* Chalcolithic complex, comprising the *Laona* cemetery and settlement and the *Vathyrkakas* cemeteries 1–3, separated by the *Vathyrkakas* River gorge, dates to the later part of the Middle Chalcolithic period and the start of the Late Chalcolithic, i.e. 3000 BC (Peltenburg, 2011: 681). It ‘is positioned at a nexus of communication routes along the coast and between the coast and the mountains’ (ibid.: 683), ‘at the [eastern] border of a regional grouping of Chalcolithic settlements’ (ibid.). At the *Souskiou-Vathyrkakas* cemeteries, repeated looting and problems with recovery and recording

hamper detailed assessment of trends in body positioning and potential manipulations. In contrast, the *Souskiou-Laona* cemetery provides a fruitful location for such investigations, due to full skeletal recovery, detailed recording (including observations on-site by a human bone specialist), and the site's importance within the contextual investigation of Chalcolithic Cyprus (Peltenburg, 1985, 1991, 1998, 2006; Steel, 2004; Crewe et al., 2005; Peltenburg et al., 2006).

While the question of how to dispose of a dead body has, in most cultural contexts, a normative answer that is regulated by tradition and socio-cultural norms, the specific forms this disposal takes in practice varies even within specific cultural contexts, as well as cross-culturally and chronologically. Cross-cultural variation in burial pathways is extensive, ranging from primary, one-off disposal, often with ritual elaboration, to complex secondary manipulations of the dead body and/or its parts. When analysing the positional evidence recovered from burial contexts through excavation, it is crucial to be able to differentiate between the results of taphonomic processes and significant, intentional human action. It is clearly only the latter that provides us the opportunity to put forward social interpretations. *Anthropologie de terrain*, or archaeothanatology, a taphonomic and contextual approach to archaeological human remains (Duday, 1978, 1981, 1987a, 1987b, 2006, 2010; Duday & Masset, 1987; Duday et al., 1990) is particularly useful in allowing us access to the sequence of decomposition—or fragmentation (see Chapman, 2000, 2010; Chapman & Gaydarska, 2007; Rebay-Salisbury, 2010; Rebay-Salisbury et al., 2010)—of the corpse into its skeletal elements, and through this knowledge allowing us to make inferences regarding the original positioning of the body. Studies of

intentional manipulation become possible with this approach, allowing us to investigate the processes through which a whole is reduced to its parts, which, in some instances, are re-integrated into a new whole. While there is cross-cultural variation and ambiguity in the conceptualisations of body parts (Christensen, 2000: 53; Place, 2000), there is a material basis that cannot, and should not, be ignored; dead bodies decompose similarly for all anatomically modern humans, resulting in specific skeletal elements. This forms a suitable material basis for our studies. As a result, insights into the complex sequence of cultural and natural processes involved in the death and disposal cycles that form particular mortuary contexts become possible.

RESULTS

Burial contexts at the settlement sites of *Kissonerga-Mosphilia*, *Kissonerga-Mylouthkia*, *Lemba-Lakkous*, and *Souskiou-Laona* include intentional deposits of mainly single, fully articulated individuals in earth-cut features (mostly pits). In contrast, burial contexts at the *Souskiou-Laona* cemetery include intentional deposits of fully articulated, semi-articulated, and fully disarticulated human skeletal remains in rock-cut features, and often contain multiple individuals. The *Souskiou-Vathyrakakas* evidence, recovered after looting, is potentially consistent with the practices of manipulation seen at *Souskiou-Laona*, but such inferences have come about only after the research at *Souskiou-Laona* cemetery and cannot stand by themselves.

The most common tomb type at the *Souskiou-Laona* cemetery consists of deep, c. 1.5–2 m, sub-rectangular shafts cut into rock that widen to an oval base (Crewe et al., 2005: 52). These tombs are either

with or without a circular cut to receive arrangements of capstones. In addition, there are pit tombs cut into soft *havara* (a term, of Arabic origin, used in Cyprus for a ‘surficial, soft, porous, white to buff, carbonaceous, clastic rock of Quaternary age’ [Schirmer, 1998: 110]), oval in shape, and smaller in size (*ibid.*). At Souskiou-*Vathyrkakas* a wide range of tomb types can also be seen; ‘rock-cut tomb types at Vathyrkakas Cemetery 1 include pits, straight shafts, bell-shaped shafts, and square pit-and-shaft tombs’ (Peltenburg, 2011: 684). Most of the tombs in the Souskiou cemeteries are either pits or bottle-shaped shafts (Peltenburg, 2011: 684). No secure evidence for any grave containers was found.

At Lemba-*Lakkous* fifty-two individuals were recovered, while at Kissonerga-*Mosphilia* eighty-nine individuals were found (Lunt & Watt, 1998: 101). At Souskiou-Laona settlement only a few earth-cut pit burials were recovered, including an adult individual (Peltenburg, 2011: 686) and a few subadult individuals (analyses ongoing). At Kissonerga-*Mylouthkia*, ten individuals date to the Early Chalcolithic (mainly from pits and general settlement deposits) and one to the Middle Chalcolithic (Fox et al., 2003: 221). The majority of individuals buried at settlement sites are sub-adult. A total of 137 tombs and a range of other features have been recorded at Souskiou-Laona cemetery (Crewe et al., 2005: 47; Peltenburg, 2011: 683). Several tombs could not be examined due to erosion, or thick vegetation (Crewe et al., 2005: 47). Human skeletal material from all excavated tombs was recovered, recorded and analysed. At the much looted site of Souskiou-*Vathyrkakas*, some eighty tombs were recorded (Peltenburg, 2011: 684). *Vathyrkakas* Cemeteries 2 and 3 have been characterized as ‘small concentrations of entirely looted graves’ (Peltenburg, 2011:

684). The twenty-nine intact adult individuals retrieved from Souskiou-Laona cemetery are a significant addition to the available skeletal remains recovered from Cypriot Chalcolithic contexts; there are only fourteen adults from Lemba-*Lakkous*, twenty-three adults from Kissonerga-*Mosphilia*, one adult from Souskiou-Laona settlement, and the remains of three to six adults (all incomplete and some represented by a single bone only) from Chalcolithic contexts at Kissonerga-*Mylouthkia* (Fox et al., 2003: 221).

Within the intact tomb contexts at Souskiou-Laona cemetery there are two different kinds of burial material. Intact, complete skeletons (one to three, were present; hyperflexed, mostly on the right side, slightly supine; Figure 2) form the primary burial material, while bonestacks consist of secondary arrangements of bone elements, often from several individuals (Table 1). The arms and legs of the skeletons are flexed, a position that would have not only allowed the placement of the corpses into the relatively small tomb cuts, but also potentially eased the carrying of corpses to the cemetery. The foot bones of the articulated individuals often lie on top of the bonestack material, indicating the sequence of intentional placement of skeletonized, secondary burial remains in one end of the tomb, prior to the placement of a new, fleshed body. The stacks of bones consist mainly of fully disarticulated skeletal elements from all parts of the body, carefully arranged, but also contain semi-articulated sections (Figure 3). Crania (up to ten) are most often placed on their inferior aspects (lower surface of cranium), aligned along the tomb wall, on top of the postcranial material forming the bonestacks. Larger longbones are grouped along the tomb wall. Tombs contain remains from both adults (skeletally mature, with both males and females found) and subadults



Figure 2. A selection of Souskiou-Laona tombs showing one (Tombs 221, left), two (Tomb 155, middle) and three (Tomb 207, right) articulated skeletons. Note the hyperflexed position of the skeletons. Photographs: K.O. Lorentz

(skeletally immature, consisting of infants [birth to three years], children [three to twelve years] and adolescents [twelve to twenty years]; these are analytical categories, not corresponding to any past social notions of age), including the very young (under one year) (Table 2).

The semi-articulated material (Figure 3) most likely represents parts of bodies moved from the area reserved for articulated, primary burials, to the bonestack

area before decomposition was complete. What were the time intervals involved? Were tombs filled with soil or left unfilled? Using *anthropologie de terrain* and the following evidence, we may conclude that tombs were left unfilled between burials. Such evidence includes the closeness of bone elements within the bonestacks; the orientation of ribs in articulated burials; the characteristic displacement of crania, mandibles, and

Table 1 The number of articulated individuals and cranial MNI (Minimum Number of Individuals) in bonestacks in selected Souskiou-Laona cemetery tombs*.

Tomb	Articulated individuals	Bonestack MNI (cranial)
108	1	1
155	2	0 (no bonestack)
192	1	6
200	2	2
207	3	4
220	1	5
221	1	0 (no bonestack)

*Preliminary data; further detail will be available in the Souskiou-Laona monograph, currently in preparation by E. Peltenburg.



Figure 3. A bonestack in Souskiou-Laona (SL) Tomb 192, including an articulated section of the thorax (indicated by the arrows). Note the position of the crania on top of the bonestack, along the tomb wall.
Photograph: K.O. Lorentz

cervical vertebrae of articulated individuals; and the fineness of the sediment. Remains would have been accessible (on removal of a cap stone) for manipulation and/or observation.

In Tomb 108 (Figures 4 and 6) one primary burial was found hyperflexed, with a bonestack containing a single individual. The feet of the articulated individual were found lying on top of the bonestack. In

Tomb 192 a substantial bonestack accompanies an articulated individual. The stack contains mainly disarticulated skeletal elements, but also an articulated thorax section (vertebrae and ribs; Figure 3). The labile (a term used within *anthropologie de terrain* to refer to those articulations decomposing most rapidly; Duday et al., 1990: 31) costo-sternal articulation has decomposed, which may have taken a couple of weeks to some months, before this section was moved to the bonestack. The rib-vertebra articulations are not particularly labile, nor persistent indicating that the length of the interval that occurred between two successive primary burials (the latter involving movement of the partially decomposed body section to the bonestack) was months rather than years, given the climate. The triple burial in Tomb 207 (Figure 2, right) resulted from a single burial episode, evidenced by the articulation and location of the bones and the close proximity of the skeletons. A lone right upper arm was discovered at the junction of the sizeable bonestack and the area containing the articulated burials (Figure 5). This body section consists of the shoulder girdle (scapula and the clavicle) still articulated to the right humerus.

Table 2 Age and sex data for skeletal material in selected Souskiou-Laona cemetery tombs*.

Tomb	Number of adults	Number of sub-adults	Number of males**	Number of females**
108	2	0	0	2
155	2	0	1	1
192	6	1	1	5
200	4	0	3	1
207	6	1	0	6
220	5	1	1	4
221	1	0	0	1

*Preliminary data based on articulated individuals and crania in bonestacks; further detail will be available in the Souskiou-Laona monograph, currently in preparation by E. peltenburg.

**NB. The 'number of males/females' includes both those adult individuals sexed as 'male/female' and 'probable male/female'. Subadults are not included.

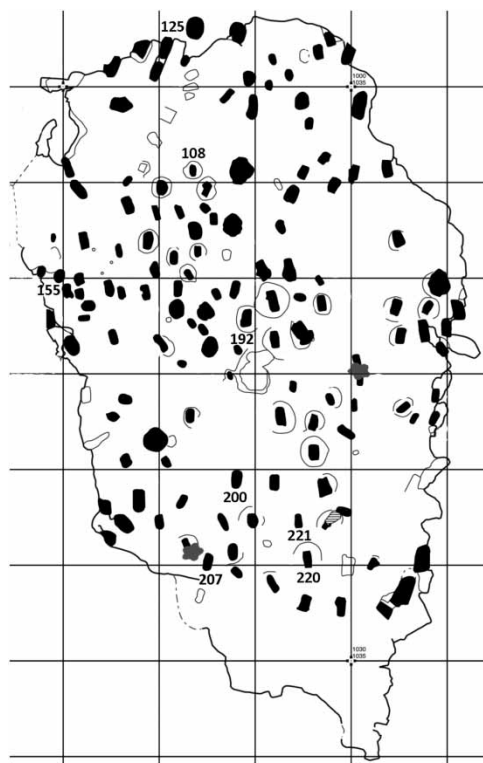


Figure 4. Plan of Souskiou-Laona cemetery showing Chalcolithic tombs (filled in), and the location of the tombs mentioned (Tomb 108 below the number on the plan; Tombs 125 and 155 to the right of the number; Tombs 192, 200, 207, 220, and 221 above the number). Grid square width 5 m, north—top right of plan. Modified after a plan drawn by Dr L. Crewe, see Crewe et al. (2005: 45, fig. 4). Published here with the kind permission of Prof. E. Peltenburg, and Dr L. Crewe

Given the Cypriot climate, the scapulo-thoracic junction (one of the most labile in the body) would likely have decomposed within weeks, rather than months. While the articulation between the humerus and the shoulder girdle is not one of the most persistent, it was still intact at the time when the body from which it originated was moved to make room for the triple burial.

Evidence from tombs 108, 192, and 207 indicates that the time span between

successive burial episodes was relatively short, at least in some cases. Discovery of separate limbs (such as in Tomb 207, and possibly in Tomb 125) begs the question whether extremities were intentionally severed from bodies (the articulations between the sacrum and the last lumbar vertebra, the sacrum and the ilium, and the femur and the pelvis are some of the most persistent in the skeleton). Circumstantial evidence relevant to this question includes a flint blade deposited on the pelvis of an articulated burial. The poor preservation status of the human remains does not allow for analyses of possible cut marks, and ethnographic research shows that societies familiar with animal butchery protected the sharpness of blades by severing ligaments and soft tissue (rather than bone) to effect detachment of limbs.

Thus, whole bodies were brought to the cemetery and subsequently reduced to separate skeletal elements. Emphasis was afforded to some parts: placement of crania in particular locations and a specific position; placement of larger longbones along the tomb walls, aligned on top of the more irregular postcranial bones. Parts of several individuals were mixed or combined, amounting to the obliteration of the individual skeleton in favour of a communal reorganization—the bonestack. None of these practices have been observed on the Chalcolithic settlement sites; there is evidence for extensive manipulation of human bodies after death only at the cemetery sites. This conclusion is based on observations and first hand analyses of tomb contexts and skeletal material from both the settlement sites and the cemetery sites. The substantial evidence for the complex and intentional manipulation of the dead body, both on introduction to tomb features, as well as subsequently, only became clear and was documented fully during the excavation and analyses of the *Souskiou-Laona*

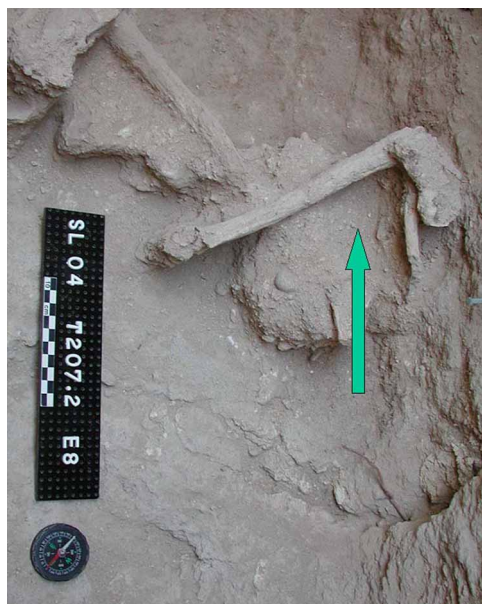


Figure 5. Semi-articulated remains in SL Tomb 207; articulated right shoulder girdle and upper arm (scapula, clavicle, humerus). Photograph by K.O. Lorentz

cemetery site. The extensive manipulation of human bodies and skeletal remains within the *Souskiou-Laona* tombs forms a clear departure from the mainly primary inhumations of the preceding periods, and allows us to investigate Middle Chalcolithic burial pathways at a level of detail not previously available. When the evidence from the *Vathyrkakas* cemeteries 1–3 (e.g. Christou, 1989: 85, fig 12.3; Peltenburg, 2006, 2011: 685) is re-examined in the light of investigations at *Souskiou-Laona*, it is consistent with the hypothesis that such secondary manipulations also took place at the *Vathyrkakas* cemeteries. The *Souskiou* site complex seems to have been abandoned c. 2700 BC, at which point the kind of mortuary practices described here ceased, implying ‘a major disjuncture in the development of Cypriot society’ (Peltenburg, 2011: 688).



Figure 6. Feet of the articulated individual on top of the bone stack (SL Tomb 108). The photograph shows remains prior to the recovery of the lower half of the articulated individual, and before the excavation of the upper half (due to the small size of the tomb floors, shaft depth, and the density of human remains, excavation in stages was necessary).

Photograph: K.O. Lorentz

DISCUSSION

Let us now consider a social interpretation for these extensive, intentional manipulations. We can make the following interpretative suggestions:

1. Bodies were mainly introduced to the burial features as intact, primary burials, rather than commingled secondary remains brought from elsewhere (matching MNI counts of small and large postcranial bones, in line with the number of crania, at least in tombs 192, 200, 207, and 220; see Farnaby, 2008).

2. Following decomposition of the soft tissue, the remains of intact primary burials were moved to the bonestack end of the tomb.
3. Skeletons were not always fully decomposed when introduction of new primary burials necessitated the removal of previous remains to the bonestack (or other reasons warranted their further manipulation). This resulted in the semi-articulated material present in some tombs. Placement of bodies into particular tombs was not governed by considerations, such as which one was 'ready' to receive a new body. Rather, specific bodies needed to be disposed of in specific tombs. In other words, the unit of use was not the cemetery as a whole, but the individual burial facility. The nature of the groups using specific tomb facilities remains an enigma (but see potential suggestions below).
4. Bone elements were not simply shoved casually or in a utilitarian manner to the bonestack, but carefully arranged, indicating planned and orderly disposal of the remains: longbones were aligned along tomb walls, irregular postcranial bones were placed under the longbones, crania were arranged on the top of bonestacks, placed on their inferior surfaces, and aligned along tomb walls. The feet of the primary burial(s) were then placed on or near the bonestack (Figure 6), constructing a physical connection between the most recently deceased and those already in the bonestack—whether relatives, members of a funerary group, or another socio-cultural grouping.
5. MNI counts of larger and smaller bones indicate that secondary manipulation occurred within tomb facilities, rather than elsewhere (e.g. in adjacent tombs, or outside the cemetery).
6. The degree of joint flexion evident in the articulated burials would have facilitated placement of bodies into the relatively small tomb facilities and the movement of bodies to the cemeteries, whether from settlements further away, or at a closer range (Peltenburg et al., 2006), regardless of route or means. The degree of joint flexion of the skeletons would have necessitated some type of tying/bundling up, implying one of the following: either manipulation of the body immediately after death prior to rigor mortis setting in (according to modern medical literature rigor mortis sets in around three hours after death, reaching maximum stiffness after twelve hours, with some variation), or once it has released its grip (approximately 72 hours after death, depending on temperature).

The *Souskiou-Laona* evidence provides us with glimpses of the types of mortuary manipulations and their timings during the Middle Chalcolithic. The patterning indicates a shared set of ideals governing the spatial layout and temporal sequence of manipulation. The sequence leading to the formation of bonestacks would have required a rather robust understanding of different types of bone elements. Progressive decomposition stages are visible, indicating several episodes of access. The skeletal elements of decomposed bodies were not simply shoved aside summarily, but particular elements were carefully placed in particular places, in a particular order. The underlying principles of placement of elements were followed in all the tombs, indicating a remarkably homogeneous practice over a period of time, and possibly even specialist involvement. There are up to ten burials present in a burial facility, indicating at least ten episodes of access and intervention, provided

that no double or triple burials occurred in the sequence.

One of the ways in which we can interpret these rich data are to focus on the processes the individual bodies went through, finally ending up as disarticulated bone elements in carefully arranged bone-stacks. To rephrase, the several dead bodies introduced to a single tomb as individual, articulated bodies end up being used to create entirely new entities: the communal, disarticulated, but not disorganized, multi-body depositions, created through successive interventions and re-interventions on the part of the living. These processes can be interpreted as an intentional movement away from the integrity of an individual body towards a communal whole, suitable for emphasising a collective identity.

Research outside Cyprus that focuses on changing identities of the deceased through secondary manipulations of human remains interpreted in the social context (Malone et al., 1993, 2009; Campbell & Green, 1995; Thomas, 2001; Kansa & Campbell, 2004; Skeates, 2010) provides a scholarly background, against which the ideas presented here (i.e. intentional movement between the integrity of an individual body and a communal whole suitable for emphasising a collective identity) can be mirrored. Hertz (1960[1907]: 86) wrote that ‘death as a social phenomenon consists in a dual and painful process of mental disintegration and synthesis’—such a process of disintegration and synthesis provides a fruitful opportunity not only for the renegotiation of the identity of the deceased, but also the employment of this process towards renegotiation or reinforcement of the social fabric of the community.

What we see emerging during the Chalcolithic is not only a new organization of space as regards the disposal of the deceased (from settlement burial only, to

burial in designated mortuary spaces for selected groups), but also a new way of dealing with the very remains of the deceased themselves. Individual bodies were transformed to collective wholes, constituting a process of identity negotiation, amounting to prioritisation of the communal (or ‘dividual’: Bloch, 1988; Strathern, 1988) over the individual. While the specific kinds of mortuary practices evident at Souskiou ceased upon the abandonment of the site complex, c. 2700 BC (Peltenburg, 2011: 688), multiple burial characterises mortuary practices from the Early Bronze Age onwards.

As to the relationship between the cemeteries and the settlements, and the respective use of communities, Peltenburg (2011: 685) estimates some 1200 individuals are buried within the Souskiou cemetery complexes. This number far exceeds burial numbers within any Neolithic or Chalcolithic settlement. He produces a population estimate of c. 100–600 people (likely closer to the lower limit) for the *Souskiou-Laona* settlement (ibid.). Based on the discrepancy between these estimates, Peltenburg proposes that burials at the Souskiou cemeteries are of selected people from the surrounding region, as well as from the Souskiou settlement (ibid.: 686). Peltenburg (ibid.: 688) interprets the *Souskiou-Laona* settlement as ‘a production centre for the creation of some of the most outstanding cruciform figurines of Cyprus’, serving a mortuary ideology which was ‘used to integrate communities across the region’. He argues for the emergence of higher status groups, using evidence from the *Kissonerga-Mosphilia* settlement and *Souskiou-Vathyrikakas* cemetery 1. The analyses of human remains form an emerging picture of extensive manipulation of body parts, the focus moving from the individual to the communal, which resonates with the above interpretations. It seems that there

was a social niche for such elaboration through mortuary ritual, such as that described by Thomas (2001) for Britain (although the movement here is in reverse).

There is one further issue to consider: what kind of individual bodies were deemed suitable for inclusion in these burial features and the communal bone-stacks which they contain? The answer must focus not only on the gendered and aged bodies as represented by the skeletal remains, but also on representations of human bodies included within the burials, in the form of anthropomorphic figurines. Used during life (evidenced by wear on suspension holes and grooves, and signs of repair), such figurines were also included in burial. While the inclusion of anthropomorphic depictions within the Cypriot Chalcolithic burials is not the norm, they are present in some tombs (Vagnetti, 1980). The criteria regarding which dead bodies were to be accompanied by depicted human bodies are lost to us—

there is no clear differential practice relating to age or gender. The placement and specific positioning of these depictions in the tombs requires further research. The body posture depicted in the cruciform figurines includes tucked-up knees, reminiscent of the positioning of dead bodies (Figure 7). These figurines have been connected to fertility, pregnancy and birth, but their presence in the tombs and the similarities in body positioning may warrant consideration of their role in the creation of embodied identities in the mortuary context. Goring's (1992) study of the secondary treatment of Chalcolithic figurines is particularly interesting, showing intentional breakage and manipulation of the human body as depicted.

Evidence for negotiations of embodied identity in prehistoric contexts may be sought not only from remains that allow us to reconstruct mortuary practices, such as skeletal remains and burial contexts, but also from remains or evidence that pertain to the living body and its transformations

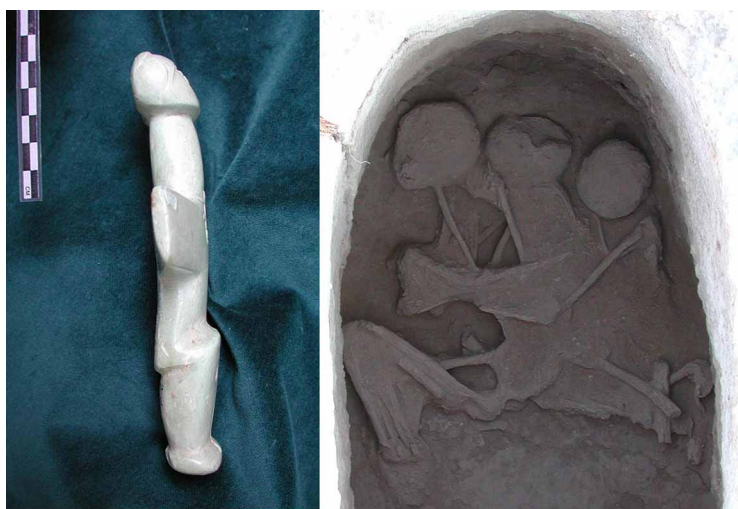


Figure 7. Similarities between body positions: Chalcolithic anthropomorphic cruciform figurine (left: right lateral view; figurine not from Souskiou), skeletons in a Chalcolithic burial (right: showing left lateral aspect; SL Tomb 207).

Photographs by K.O. Lorentz; left: courtesy of Department of Antiquities, Cyprus

(e.g. intentional cultural modifications, activity markers, evidence for diet), as well as from anthropomorphic depictions. While the practice of intentional cultural cranial modification, inherently related to negotiations of identity, is well known from periods both before and after the Chalcolithic, there is no evidence currently for its use during the Chalcolithic (Lorentz, 2006: 300). Preservation issues hamper studies of activity markers and diet in ancient Cyprus. Chronological changes in anthropomorphic depictions have been interpreted with reference to identity, for example in terms of gender (see Bolger, 1996, 2003). The increasing abundance of anthropomorphic figurines viewed as referring to fertility and birth during the Chalcolithic has been interpreted in terms of social change by several scholars (Bolger, 1996; Peltenburg, 2011: 683).

Burial pathways at the Cypriot Middle/Late Chalcolithic cemeteries were clearly aimed at integrating individuals into communal wholes. The types of individuals admitted to this process were not restricted by age or gender. The preservation of the remains and the prehistoric context does not allow us to make further evidence-based inferences about the other kinds of socio-cultural criteria that may have governed the choice of the tomb feature that individuals were introduced into on the occasion of death. It is clear, however, that such socio-cultural criteria must have been in place. The simple pragmatic interpretations that (a) bodies were inserted according to where there was space available, or (b) where the decomposition process was complete to allow stacking of bone and thus clearing space for a new burial, are untenable. Relevant evidence includes the fact that, among tombs of similar size, some hold only a couple individuals while others have larger numbers, and that there is substantial

evidence of incomplete decomposition of bodies and body parts within the bonestacks.

These findings, specific to Chalcolithic Cyprus, also contribute towards the understandings of the variety in the treatment of the dead human body, and how these treatments in the past were governed by an entirely different set of sensibilities and social considerations from those we are familiar with from our own societies and ethnographies. These insights have the potential to enhance our understanding of how the human body, and the dead body in particular, was used to create and reinforce social categories and identities. Such complex manipulations were not restricted to adults alone; children of different ages also received such treatment. Similarly, such transformations of the body were not reserved for one gender, but were gender inclusive. Thus, the insights gained through this focus on the specificities of Cypriot Chalcolithic burial practices have the potential to contribute to wider archaeological research problems. Our understandings of incipient social complexity and social inequality in Cyprus are enhanced by a detailed understanding of how people were buried. Toumazou (1987: 151) and Knapp *et al.* (1994) have emphasised how the Vathyrkakas cemeteries completely change our understanding of Chalcolithic burial customs. The *Laona* evidence allows us to look at these practices in fine detail, hitherto not available, which brings to light aspects previously uncovered. Further, research problems relating to age and assignation of personhood (see Fowler, 2004), as well as gender, can benefit from such insights. We now know that children, even those under one year of age, were buried not only on settlements, but also within cemeteries, and were included in burial features in cemeteries together with adults during the Cypriot

Chalcolithic, rather than being separated by type of burial feature or location. Both male and female deceased seem to have been put through similar pathways of bodily manipulation and elaboration. Contributions towards anthropological research problems include insights into the cross-cultural variations in the way in which human societies deal with their dead, and the degrees to which manipulation of the remains of the dead, be they fully decomposed or only partially so, is acceptable or desirable.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to consider how the human body, and the dead body in particular, was used to create social categories and identities in prehistoric Cyprus. In particular, I have argued that the extensive, intentional manipulation visible in the Cypriot Chalcolithic extramural cemeteries was aimed at integrating the individual into communal, collective wholes on the occasion of death. Further, I have argued that this process was not differentiated by gender or age on the whole. The evidence discussed is consistent with the above arguments, in that individual bodies, reduced through decomposition, or even through intentional manipulation, to their individual parts, were extensively manipulated within single burial features to form complex and highly organized bonestacks containing bone elements and, at times, larger body sections from several different individuals. Further, the presence of both females and males, as well as children of different ages, including very young infants, indicates firmly that the criteria for entry to such complex body manipulation pathways did not rest on age or gender, but some other form of socio-cultural difference. Pragmatic explanations that consider

availability of space, or state of completeness of decomposition, as criteria that define where dead bodies were placed, are not convincing given the recorded evidence.

There are limitations to the possibility of exploring the criteria surrounding which bodies were introduced to which specific burial feature, due to the state of preservation of the human remains, which prevents detailed analyses of health and disease, adult age ranges, and at times sex. Nevertheless, it is clear that specific criteria existed, possibly relating to socio-cultural group membership (kinship, role in the community etc.), beyond the utilitarian considerations of where space was available and where decomposition of previous bodies was complete. The negotiation of social identities was a continuous process, not limited to the immediate time period surrounding death, but involving continued manipulation and reorganization of body parts and skeletal elements within the burial features. Such transformations of the body, from single corpses to the bonestack as a collective whole, resulted in a continuous process of creation and reinforcement of social identities, focused on the integration of an individual social actor to a communal and collective whole.

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Project, to publish human remains and specific photographs from specific *Souskiou-Laona* tombs, and the plan in Figure 4, in advance of the final publication of the site. Further, I would like to thank Dr Lindy Crewe, in charge of the excavation of the *Souskiou-Laona* cemetery, for her collaborative spirit, and permission to modify the site plan in Figure 4 from the original prepared by her. Thanks are also due to my students, too numerous to mention by name here, who over the years have contributed to the excavation, cleaning, and inventory of the human remains discussed. I am grateful to colleagues who have commented on drafts of this paper, the anonymous reviewers, and the editor, whose comments greatly improved the paper—any mistakes that remain are mine. Different parts of research contributing to this paper have received funding and/or support in kind from the following bodies and institutions, whose support is gratefully acknowledged: The Oskar Huttunen Foundation, The Dorothy Garrod Fund (Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge), The University of Newcastle Fieldwork Fund, The Cyprus Institute.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Corps transformés: Négotiations de l'identité en Chypre chalcolithique

Cet article porte sur la façon dont le corps humain, et plus particulièrement le cadavre, était utilisé pour créer des catégories et identités sociales en Chypre préhistorique. Plus précisément, il examine comment une condition particulière comme la mort fut intégrée dans des processus sociaux, et comment le traitement des cadavres créait et renforçait en même temps des catégories et identités sociales. Les preuves

matérielles sur lesquelles cet article se base sont les maisons mortuaires en Chypre chalcolithique. On soutient notamment que la manipulation extensive et intentionnelle des cadavres et restes humains comme on l'observe dans les cimetières du Chalcolithique chypriote, avait pour but d'intégrer l'individu à des ensembles communautaires et collectifs à l'occasion d'un décès et pendant la période consécutive. Translation by Isabelle Gerges.

Mots-clés: archéologie du corps, catégories sociales, identités sociales, restes humains, inhumation secondaire, Chalcolithique, Chypre

Transformierte Körper: Betrachtungen zur Identität im chalkolithischen Zypern

Dieser Beitrag untersucht, wie der menschliche Körper—und insbesondere der eines Verstorbenen—dazu genutzt wurde, soziale Kategorien und Identitäten im prähistorischen Zypern zu schaffen. Insbesondere betrachtet er, wie ein bestimmter Zustand, wie z. B. der Tod, in soziale Prozesse eingebettet war und wie die Behandlung des toten Körpers soziale Kategorien und Identitäten schuf und auch vertiefte. Das Ausgangsmaterial des Artikels umfasst menschliche Überreste des kupferzeitlichen Zypern. Insbesondere wird betont, dass die umfassende und intentionelle Manipulation des toten Körpers und menschlicher Überreste, die auf chalkolithischen Nekropolen Zyperns beobachtet werden können, darauf hinzielte, das Individuum anlässlich des Todes und der nachfolgenden Zeit in die kommunale, kollektive Gesamtheit einzubeziehen. Translation by Heiner Schwarzberg

Stichworte: Archäologie des Körpers, soziale Kategorien, soziale Identitäten, menschliche Überreste, Sekundärbestattung, Chalkolithikum, Zypern